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SUBJECT: MOROCCO 2009 INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS
CONTROL STRATEGY REPORT

REF: STATE 100989

11. Summary: The Government of Morocco (GOM) has achieved significant reductions in its cannabis and cannabis resin production in recent years. Advances in Morocco's counternarcotics efforts are a result of the GOM's comprehensive counternarcotics strategy, which emphasizes combining conventional law enforcement, crop eradication, and demand reduction efforts with economic development to erode the "cannabis-growing culture" that exists in northern Morocco. The vast majority of cannabis produced in Morocco is consumed in Europe and has little, if any, impact on the U.S. market for illegal drugs. Morocco is a party to the 1988 UN Drug Convention. End Summary.

Status of Country

12. Morocco is one of the world's largest cannabis resin (hashish) producers, but its importance as a main source country for cannabis resin is declining. The 2009 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) World Drug Report states that although Morocco remains one of the world's largest producers of cannabis, fewer countries around the world are citing Morocco as the "source" country or "origin" of the cannabis resin found in their markets. The percentage of countries citing Morocco as the origin of hashish found in their markets has dropped from 31 percent in 2003 to 21 percent in 2009. This statistic appears to indicate some success of the GOM's counter-drug efforts as well as increased cannabis resin production in Afghanistan.

13. Cannabis remains primarily an export for Moroccan growers, with the vast majority of the product typically processed into cannabis resin or oil and exported predominately to Europe. Only very small amounts of cannabis and narcotics being produced in or transiting through Morocco reach the United States. Cannabis cultivation has historically centered in the northern tip of the country, between the Rif Mountains and the Mediterranean Sea, and at one time large segments of the population of that area participated in the cultivation. The GOM has had some success reducing the area used for cannabis cultivation and encouraging the cultivation of alternative crops. Fewer than 100,000 Moroccans are currently involved in cannabis cultivation, according to the GOM.

¶4. The center of cannabis production in Morocco appears to have shifted from Chefchaouen to al-Hoceima due to GOM eradication efforts. Most cannabis cultivation occurs in al-Hoceima, with the adjoining province of Chefchaouen largely making up the rest of production. The provinces of Larache, Taounate, and Tetouan, which were formerly major production centers, have become less important areas for cannabis cultivation as a direct result of GOM eradication efforts.

¶5. Morocco is also combating the growth in trafficking and consumption of "harder drugs," particularly cocaine. According to the GOM, South American drug smugglers continue to transport cocaine through Morocco and onward to Europe.

¶6. Heroin and psychotropic drugs (methamphetamine, Ecstasy, etc.) are also making inroads into the country but to a lesser extent than cocaine. Morocco has only a relatively modest licit requirement for dual-use meth or Ecstasy precursor chemicals (1025 kg of pseudoephedrine), and the country neither serves as a known source nor transit point for diverted meth precursors.

Country Actions against Drugs in 2009

¶7. Policy Initiatives. Morocco's national strategy to combat drugs rests on the three pillars of: (1) interdiction, (2) eradication, and (3) demand reduction. Morocco's strongest actions have been in

the areas of interdiction and eradication. GOM officials seek to build upon their already strong existing relationships with international organizations such as the UNODC, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB), and INTERPOL. This cooperation has been strong on the law enforcement side but less robust in terms of demand reduction efforts, as GOM officials still consider demand to be mainly a European problem.

¶8. Morocco's national drug strategy is augmented by an emphasis on a broader economic development approach and crop substitution. Moroccan officials have reported the successful substitution of olives, figs and carob for cannabis since the launch of their 2004 drug-eradication campaign, and saffron may offer another alternative.

¶9. Moroccan authorities reported that they hope to complete another detailed drug study in cooperation with UNODC as well as update their national drug strategy in 2010. The Moroccan Ministry of Interior (MOI) has the goal to reduce cannabis cultivation to 12,000 ha by 2012. If this goal is accomplished, it will mean that Morocco will have reduced cannabis cultivation by 91% since it first started serious eradication efforts in 2003, according to the GOM.

¶10. Law Enforcement Efforts. The following table is a summary of Morocco's drug seizure efforts since ¶2004. The decrease in cannabis and hashish seizures between 2007 and 2008 may partly be the result of successful GOM eradication efforts and droughts reducing the supply cannabis and hashish on the local market.

Year	Cannabis	Hashish	Cocaine	Heroin	Psychotropic
Drugs					
2004	318 MT	86 MT	4 kg	1,001 grams	168,257 units

2005	116 MT	96 MT	8 kg	5,335 grams	94,900 units
2006	60 MT	89 MT	57 kg	714 grams	55,881 units
2007	209 MT	118 MT	248 kg	1,906 grams	55,243 units
2008	222 MT	114 MT	34 kg	6,325 grams	48,293 units
2009 (January to October)	185 MT	174 MT	19 kg	2,754 grams	34,669 units

¶11. The GOM has deployed 11,000 personnel throughout the northern and south western coastal areas to interdict drug shipments, maintain counternarcotics checkpoints, and staff observation posts along the coast. The Moroccan Navy carries out routine sea patrols. GOM forces are now using helicopters, planes, speed boats, mobile x-ray scanners, ultrasound equipment, and satellites in their drug fight. The mobile x-ray scanner has proven to be particularly effective. In April, customs and police officials seized and destroyed a record 34 MT of cannabis at the port in Casablanca. In June, the GOM seized 20 MT of cannabis resin during an inspection at the port of Nador, the largest load ever seized there.

¶12. According to the GOM, Moroccan law enforcement arrested 27,226 individuals in connection with drug related offenses in 2009, of whom 471 were foreigners arrested for international drug trafficking. Arrests of traffickers at the seaports and of arriving cocaine "mules" from Sub-Saharan Africa at the Casablanca airport are frequently in the news. Detection training and the use of ultrasound equipment were critical to the success of these seizures. As authorities become more vigilant, GOM officials opine that cocaine smugglers are likely to seek access to Europe through much harder to detect land routes and other methods.

¶13. Moroccan law provides a maximum allowable prison sentence for drug offenses of 30 years, as well as fines for illegal drug violations ranging from \$20,000-\$80,000. Ten to 15 years' imprisonment remains the typical sentence for major drug traffickers convicted in Morocco.

¶14. Corruption. As a matter of government policy, the GOM does not encourage or facilitate illicit production or distribution of narcotic or psychotropic drugs or other controlled substances, or the laundering of proceeds from illegal drug transactions. These actions are illegal and the government tries to enforce these laws to the best of its ability. Despite GOM actions to combat the illicit drug trafficking industry, narcotics-related corruption among governmental, judicial, military and law enforcement officials appears to continue. In January, authorities dismantled a large international drug trafficking ring involving some Moroccan government officials. The 112 defendants, including 35 civilians, 30 members of the Royal Navy, 19 members of the Royal Gendarmerie, 27 members of the Auxiliary Forces, and one member of the Royal Armed Forces, have been charged with alleged involvement in forming a criminal gang, international drug trafficking, and corruption.

¶15. In July, Spanish authorities extradited notorious drug baron Mohamed Taieb Ahmed (AKA "El

Nene") to Morocco following his escape from from a prison in Kenitra with the assistance of local prison guards. In August, Moroccan courts sentenced El Nene to an additional five year prison term on charges of corruption and escaping prison.

¶16. In late 2008, the government formed the Central Commission for the Prevention of Corruption (ICPC). In July 2009, the ICPC released its first report, stating that it had received 21 valid corruption complaints. At year's end, investigations were ongoing. Officials attributed the low number of complaints, in part, to the lack of legislation protecting plaintiffs and witnesses in corruption cases. The Commission is working with the MOJ to develop procedures for processing corruption complaints. In addition to the commission, the MOJ and the Government Accountability Court (Cour de Comptes) also had jurisdiction over corruption issues.

¶17. Agreements and Treaties. Morocco is a party to the 1988 UN Drug Convention, the 1971 UN Convention on Psychotropic Substances and the 1961 UN Single Convention as amended by the 1972 Protocol. Morocco is also a party to the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, but has not signed any of its protocols. Morocco and the United States cooperate in law enforcement matters under a Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT). Morocco is a party to the UN Convention against Corruption. Morocco has several cooperative agreements to fight against drugs with European countries such as Spain, France, Portugal, and Italy, and it seeks to work closely with other Arab and African countries.

¶18. Cultivation/Production/Eradication. Morocco succeeded in decreasing the land dedicated to cannabis cultivation by 62% from 134,000 hectares in 2003 to 52,000 hectares in 2009, due in part to an aggressive eradication campaign, carried out mainly by Gendarmes and local authorities, police and customs officials, according to the GOM. Cannabis resin production dropped 75% from 3,070 MT to 760 MT between 2003 and 2009. Morocco used the following methods to eradicate illicit crops: (1) crop-dusting via airplane, (2) mechanical and manual destruction of crops and (3) burning.

¶19. GOM officials report that during the 2009 eradication campaign, they were able to eradicate a total of 8,338 ha of cannabis in the northern provinces. This includes 2,032 ha in Taounate, 6,066 ha in Chefchaouen, 5 ha in Tetouan, 3 ha in al Hoceima and 232 ha in Larache.

¶20. Since 2004, Morocco has conducted an awareness campaign for cannabis growers, alerting them to the environmental dangers of cannabis cultivation, including soil exhaustion, excessive fertilizer concentrations, and deforestation, and informing them of alternatives to use the land more productively. The GOM selected the northern province of Taounate in 2006 as the site for the construction of the National Institute of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants to study the viability of various crop substitutions. Saffron cultivation and rose petal extraction are two examples of possible future economic substitutes for cannabis cultivation in the region. Olives, figs and carob have also been successfully substituted for cannabis. GOM officials report that since the 2004 awareness campaign started, there has been a 62% decrease in cannabis production in the northern areas of the country.

¶21. Drug Flow/Transit. Given its proximity to Morocco, Spain is a key transfer point for Europe-bound Moroccan cannabis resin. From Spain, it can

normally be transshipped to most other Western European destinations. France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Italy are also major European destinations for cannabis trafficked from Morocco. Notwithstanding the changes reported above in cultivation and production, there is no confirmation of a significant diminution of cannabis products reaching these major European markets, according to the 2009 UNODC World Drug Report.

¶22. Most large shipments of illicit cannabis bound for Spain travel via speedboats, which can make the roundtrip to Spain in one hour or less, although fishing boats, yachts, and other vessels are also used. Smugglers also continue to transport cannabis via truck and car through the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, known to have lower inspection standards than the rest of the European Union, and the Moroccan port of Tangier, crossing the Strait of Gibraltar by ferry. According to the GOM, heroin enters Morocco from the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla and is therefore generally limited to the provinces of Tangier and Tetouan. At the end of 2008, Morocco and Spain formed a joint commission to fight drug trafficking and illegal migration. Spain's deployment of a network of fixed and modular radar, infrared, and video sensors around the Strait of Gibraltar, starting in 1999 and known as the Integrated System of External Vigilance (SIVE), has forced Moroccan smugglers to take longer and more vulnerable routes.

¶23. Although the main African redistribution centers for cocaine from Latin America remain Sub-Saharan, Morocco has been used as a transit country. According to the GOM, most of the seizures of cocaine have taken place in airports. The reduction in seizures of cocaine since 2007 may indicate the success of the GOM's drug eradication strategy, including increased use of x-ray scanners in airports.

¶24. The number of trans-national drug trafficking networks in Morocco is declining, according to the GOM. However, networks with French, Spanish, Dutch and Belgian ties are more prevalent. In September, authorities announced the dismantling of two drug trafficking networks. One consisted of 11 individuals specializing in robberies, assault and drug trafficking. The second ring consisted of an unreported number of individuals involved in distributing cocaine at the national level.

Domestic Programs/Demand Reduction

¶25. The GOM is concerned about anecdotal evidence suggesting an increase in domestic cocaine and heroin use, but does not currently have an effective system in place to measure and evaluate the situation. In 2009, the GOM established a drug treatment facility in Casablanca to provide specialized treatments to patients suffering from addiction. Morocco has also established a program to train the staffs of psychiatric hospitals in the

treatment of drug addiction. In order to discourage the use and sale of drugs, the Ministry of Health launched an anti-drug awareness campaign targeting school children and created drug-free school zones, patrolled by police and the Auxiliary Forces. In partnership with UNODC, the Ministry of Health is exploring the relationship between drug use and HIV/AIDS infection in Morocco. Moroccan civil society and some schools are active in promoting counternarcotics campaigns.

U.S. Policy Initiatives and Programs

¶26. Bilateral Cooperation. The USG is working to enhance Morocco's counternarcotics capability through training in law enforcement techniques, and to promote the GOM's adherence to its obligations under relevant bilateral and international narcotics control agreements. U.S.-supported efforts to strengthen anti-money laundering laws and efforts against terrorist financing may also contribute to the GOM's ability to monitor the flow of money from the cannabis trade.

¶27. The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), which covers Morocco from its Paris office, continued its bilateral exchange of information with the Moroccans in support of several ongoing drug investigations in 2009.

¶28. During FY 2009, the U.S. Government provided training to Moroccan police, gendarmes, and customs officials in the areas of (1) border interdiction training (2) cargo control (3) and fraudulent document detection.

¶29. The Road Ahead. We assess that the endemic nature of the cannabis culture in Morocco will continue to be gradually ameliorated through incremental application of Morocco's comprehensive counternarcotics strategy. The U.S. will continue to monitor the illegal drug situation in Morocco, cooperate with the GOM in its counternarcotics efforts, and, provide law enforcement training, intelligence and other support.

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